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Contact: Geoff Tyree
Phone: 509-372-1145
E-mail: Geoffrey_T_Tyree@rl.gov

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Office of River Protection and CH2M HILL free up Hanford tank space

RICHLAND, Wash.—Months of preparation paid off over the last week as the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection and its contractors retrieved over 800,000 gallons of highly radioactive and hazardous waste from an underground Hanford double-shell tank for processing in a nearby evaporator facility. Once processed in the facility, the waste volume will be significantly reduced.

The Office of River Protection (ORP) and tank waste contractor CH2M HILL Hanford Group are making space in selected double-shell tanks to serve as staging points for waste from Hanford's older tanks on its way to a planned treatment facility.

"Reducing the amount of waste in this tank is an essential step in getting ready to treat Hanford tank waste in a vitrification treatment facility," said CH2M HILL Double-Shell Tank and Waste Feed Delivery Project Manager Dale Allen. "It shows we're making progress toward cleaning up Hanford tanks and reducing the risk to the nearby Columbia River."

CH2M HILL made the waste transfer out of Tank AW-104 in a seven-day operation, ending today. The project was completed two months ahead of schedule.

"We were able to finish this early—and safely—because of a great deal of planning and preparation by an excellent team of people in CH2M HILL, our subcontractors and the Office of River Protection," said Allen. "We went into this knowing our success was critical to continuing our efforts to remove retrievable liquid waste from the aging single-shell tanks and to future plans to stage Hanford waste in this tank while it awaits treatment."

Preparations included replacing a broken 50-foot pump in Tank AW-104 in December 2000. Tank AW-104 held approximately one million gallons of waste before this week's transfer of 801,818 gallons of liquid waste out of the tank. The waste was sent to double-shell tank AW-102, where it will remain until it can be sent to Hanford's evaporator facility. The evaporator facility is expected to reduce that waste by approximately 80%.

"We're reducing the total amount of waste in our double-shell tanks by about 600,000 gallons to make room for retrieval of waste from single-shell tanks," said Allen. "We're continuing to show we can do the difficult work needed to move this project forward to treatment, the important next step toward the ultimate closure of the Hanford waste tanks."

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